

WELL VEGAN

Batch Cooking Guide



A quick guide to using a batch cooking method to save time and money on a plant-based diet.

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How much time do you spend in the kitchen every day? Between cooking dinner at night, making breakfast for yourself in the morning and packing a lunch to take to school or work, the answer is probably: Way too much time. Most of us are on the go non-stop from the moment we wake up until our heads hit the pillow at night. Any time that can be salvaged should be used for fun stuff. Like catching up on your favorite TV show, enjoying a glass of wine and reading a book, or playing outside. Not slicing and dicing vegetables and getting lost in a sea of dirty dishes. Are you with me?

What if I were to tell you that there's a way to eat healthy, delicious meals every day of the week while drastically reducing your time in the kitchen? It's true! Batch cooking is a not-so-secret phenomenon that makes maintaining a plant-based diet a breeze. Never heard of it? Basically, batch cooking involves preparing most of your meals for the entire week on one day. For me, it's on Sunday right after I've finished my grocery shopping. But you can choose whatever day of the week works best with your schedule.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Preparing all of your meals for an entire week all in one day sounds like it's going to take forever. But spend-

ing a couple of hours (maximum) in the kitchen on one day a week beats the heck out of spending an hour in the kitchen every day of the week. Doesn't it? Good. I'm glad we're on the same page. Because getting into the habit of batch cooking is going to change your entire perspective on vegan cooking — for the better.

Your friends and family will start to wonder if you're some sort of soup wizard — or a chili, curry, pasta, smoothie, salad, stir-fry, or [insert your prep-ahead meal of choice here] wizard. Whatever it is that's on the menu this week, batch cooking will be your secret weapon for saving time in the kitchen and saving you from heading to the drive-thru window — again. So buckle up! We're about to simplify your life dramatically.

Batch Cooking 101:

If cooking every meal for the entire week is way too much to wrap your head around, not to worry. You can start small. Consider your schedule and determine what day of the week you're most pressed for time. By planning ahead and cooking your meals just for that day, you're guaranteed a few extra hours to get all of your to-dos done while ensuring you sneak a few healthy meals in.

What you'll need:

- 1-gallon freezer bags
- Foil containers with lids
- Freezer safe glass containers
- Permanent marker

Batch cooking pro tips:

- Take advantage of coupons and promotions at the grocery store. Is Whole Foods having a massive sale on organic tomatoes? Buy as many as you can and make a huge batch of pasta sauce. Use half for dinner and freeze the rest.
- Label and date every bag and container before putting it in the freezer. After a few days or even weeks have passed, you may forget what that mysterious sauce is.
- Cool items to room temperature before you freeze them, but don't leave anything out longer than two hours to prevent bacteria growth.
- For foods that need to be baked, use containers that can go from the freezer straight to the oven. Like foil containers with lids.
- Use a food processor for chopping onions. A few quick pulses is much more efficient than cutting the tearjerkers by hand.
- Slightly undercook your vegetables. This will prevent them from getting mushy when you reheat them at mealtime.

Smoothies

If you've ever refrigerated a leftover smoothie, you've probably been disappointed to find that the fruit separates and the whole thing takes on a funky taste and texture. Gross! You can avoid this wasteful mess by pouring leftover smoothie into an ice cube tray and freezing it. If you plan to drink a smoothie for breakfast, simply pop the frozen cubes into a glass and let them thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Give your drink a good stir in the morning and you have a frosty smoothie that tastes surprisingly fresh.

Soup, stew, and chili

Everyone loves soup. Not everyone has the time (or the patience) required for making soup whenever the craving strikes. Luckily, soups and stews are one of the best choices for batch cooking because they freeze and reheat so beautifully. Spend a couple of hours cutting up your vegetables, measuring your spices, and mixing in your favorite grains and legumes to make a tasty, nutrient-rich meal. You can freeze individual servings to make defrosting and reheating your soup even easier.

Sauce

Like soup, sauce is a wonderful candidate for batch cooking. Everything from marinara to mushroom gravy can be made ahead of time and frozen for later consumption. One thing to keep in mind is that “creamy” sauces don’t do so well in the freezer. Coconut milk separates quite easily and it could mess with the consistency of your sauce. This can be easily remedied by simply adding your “cream” during the reheating process.

Pasta

To be perfectly honest, there’s nothing I dislike more than leftover pasta with marinara. The sauce becomes dry and tasteless in the refrigerator and it ruins the flavor of the entire dish. However, there is a way to prevent such a disaster. To batch cook a dish that includes pasta, simply prepare the noodles according to package directions, drain, and drizzle some olive oil on top. Give the pasta a good stir to completely coat each noodle in oil. This prevents them from sticking together when they cool. Pasta will keep for up to four days in the refrigerator and up to three months in the freezer like this. Simply reheat the noodles and add your sauce right before serving.

Salad

Over the years we have experimented with countless ways to bring a salad to work without it getting soggy. I'm happy to report that we've finally found a way — stacked in a jar with the dressing and heartier items on bottom and the salad greens preserved on top. If packed correctly, salad can last up to four days in the fridge like this. Just cut your veggies and cook your quinoa ahead of time and refrigerate them until you're ready to build your salad. A glass jar with a lid works best. Here's the magical stacking order from the bottom up:

1. Dressing
2. Hearty items: tomatoes, beans, onions, and carrots
3. Lighter bits: quinoa, sunflower seeds, mushrooms
4. Lettuce or spinach

When you're ready to eat, you can dump it out on to a plate, or simply shake and enjoy!

Stir-fry

One of the tastiest and most versatile vegan dishes can be prepped days in advance for a stress-free weeknight dinner.

Veggies: Simply prepare and/or chop your vegetables (bell peppers, onion, peas, water chestnuts, mushrooms, etc.) and freeze them raw. If you have room in your freezer, allowing them to freeze in a single layer will prevent them from morphing into a solid block.

Grains: You can also save time by cooking a big batch of rice, farro, or quinoa and refrigerating it until you're ready to throw your stir-fry to-

gether. Cook your grains in vegetable broth instead of water for an extra kick of flavor.

Protein: Drain, slice, and marinate your tofu overnight to let the flavor soak in. At mealtime, cut your tofu into cubes and fry it with your veggies. If you're pressed for time, you can just dice and heat some marinated baked tofu.

All that's left to do before dinner is to toss your stir-fry with some tangy sauce and top it with a handful of chopped peanuts, green onion and cilantro. Simple!

Transitioning to a vegan diet and mastering a new set of kitchen skills can be pretty time consuming. Especially when you're working with a bunch of unfamiliar recipes. That's where batch cooking swoops in to save the day. It's such a simple concept, but when applied strategically it will change your life. Give it a shot! You'll save hours in the kitchen, not to mention the calories you'd rack up at the drive-thru window. You can thank us later.

Batch Cooking Recipes

Below you'll find you'll find a handful of our favorite batch cooking recipes, complete with nutritional information. If you're looking for even more great recipes for the assembly line, be sure to visit the [Recipes](http://wellvegan.com/recipes) section of the site (<http://wellvegan.com/recipes>). Enjoy!

Tomato Bisque

Six servings • One hour to prepare

Tal Ronnen has to be my favorite vegan chef. All of his recipes are delicious, but his method can be a bit persnickety at times. Here's one of my favorites, simplified. And the regular Earth Balance is soy based, but there is a soy-free product if you're looking to avoid soy.

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons Earth Balance
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, smashed
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 5 cups faux chicken stock, Better than Bouillon brand
- 1 can (15 ounces) fire-raosted tomoatoes
- 1 can (15 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped (optional)
- 2 sprigs thyme, leaves only
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/2 cups cashew cream (See Included Recipe)

Instructions

1. Add the Earth Balance to a large stockpot over medium heat. Heat until melted, but be careful not to let it burn. Add the onions, celery, carrots, and garlic. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and continue cooking for 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
2. Add the stock, tomatoes with juice, parsley, thyme, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the cashew cream and continue to simmer for 10 minutes; be careful not to let it boil.
3. Remove the bay leaf and working in batches puree the soup in a blender. Be careful not to overfill the blender, hot liquids tend to erupt. I try to keep it to about half

capacity. You could also use an immersion blender if you have one. Return soup to pot and serve.

Nutritional Information

6 Servings, 246 Calories, 17g Fat, 21g Carbohydrates, 6g Protein, 1094mg Sodium, 9g Sugar, 3g Fiber

Regular and Thick Cashew Cream

10 minutes to prepare, plus soaking cashews overnight

Makes about 2 1/4 cups thick cream or 3 1/2 cups regular cream. Nutritional info. is based on 1/4 cup of regular cream.

Ingredients

- 2 cups whole raw cashews, rinsed very well under cold water

Instructions

1. Put the cashews in a bowl and add cold water to cover them. Cover the bowl and refrigerate overnight.
2. Drain the cashews and rinse under cold water. Place them in a blender with enough fresh cold water to cover them by 1 inch. Blend on high for several minutes until very smooth.
3. To make thick cashew cream, which some of the recipes in this book call for, simply reduce the amount of water when they are placed in the blender, so that the water just slightly covers the cashews.

Nutritional Information

14 Servings, 97 Calories, 8g Fat, 5g Carbohydrates, 3g Protein, 0mg Sodium, 1g Sugar, 1g Fiber

Rosemary White Bean Soup

Six to eight servings • One hour to prepare plus soaking the beans overnight

This is a simple and delicious soup that's great to make on a rainy day. It fills the whole house with the smell of fresh rosemary. It's also extraordinarily simple and quick, so long as you remember to soak the beans the night before.

Ingredients

- 1 pound dried white cannellini beans
- 4 cups sliced yellow onions (3 onions)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large branch fresh rosemary (6 to 7 inches)
- 2 quarts vegetable stock
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Instructions

1. In a medium bowl, cover the beans with water by at least 1-inch and leave them in the refrigerator for 6 hours or overnight. Drain.
2. In a large stockpot over low to medium heat, saute the onions with the olive oil until the onions are translucent, 10 to 15 minutes. Add the garlic and cook over low heat for 3 more minutes. Add the drained white beans, rosemary, vegetable stock, and bay leaf. Cover, bring to a boil, and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes, until the beans are very soft. Remove the rosemary branch and the bay leaf. Pass the soup through the coarsest blade of a food mill, or place in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade and pulse until coarsely pureed. Return the soup to the pot to reheat and add salt and pepper, to taste. Serve hot.

Nutritional Information

6 Servings, 394 Calories, 10g Fat, 61g Carbohydrates, 18g Protein, 2042mg Sodium, 9g Sugar, 17g Fiber

Quinoa & Sweet Potato Chili

Six servings • 45 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cans (15 oz. each) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
- 32 oz. vegetable stock
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tbsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1-in. pieces
- 1 cup dry quinoa
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 avocado
- cilantro, for garnish (optional)

Instructions

1. Heat the oil in a large heavy soup pot over medium low heat. Add onions, cook until they're soft and start to turn brown, about 10 minutes. Add garlic, cook for about 2 minutes. Add tomato paste, chili powder, cumin, and oregano and cook for about 2 more minutes, stirring constantly. Add the beans, stock, and potatoes, and season with salt and pepper . Cook for about 5 minutes, then add the quinoa. Continue cooking for about 20 minutes, stirring frequently, until quinoa and potatoes are cooked and the chili has thickened. Add a bit of water if the chili gets too thick for your liking. Top with avocado and chopped cilantro.

Nutritional Information

6 Servings, 352 Calories, 9g Fat, 56g Carbohydrates, 14g Protein, 688mg Sodium, 7g Sugar, 13g Fiber

Hearty Salad

Two servings • 15 minutes

This is a great recipe for [the salad in jar](#). If you haven't given it a try, read all about it! You'll be happy you did.

Ingredients

- 4 cups lettuce
- 1 medium tomato, diced
- 1 avocado, diced
- 1 cup quinoa, cooked according to package directions
- 1/2 cup frozen peas, thawed
- 1/2 can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 cup mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
- 1 medium carrot, peeled and chopped
- [Balsamic Vinaigrette](#) (see Recipe)

Instructions

1. Assemble all ingredients in a large bowl, toss and serve.

Nutritional Information

2 Servings, 821 Calories, 41g Fat, 91g Carbohydrates, 23g Protein, 646mg Sodium, 11g Sugar, 20g Fiber

Bean, Corn and Tortilla Salad

Four servings • 15 minutes to prepare

Ingredients

- 1 can (15.5 ounces) pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen corn kernels (2 cups)
- 1/4 cup prepared medium tomato salsa, plus more for serving
- 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced (1 cup)
- 1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, and cubed
- 3 plum tomatoes, thickly sliced
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
- 1 bag (12 ounces) romaine hearts, cut into bite-size pieces
- 3 cups (3 ounces) broken tortilla chips

Instructions

1. In a medium microwave-safe bowl, combine beans, corn, and salsa. Microwave just until warmed through, 1 minute. Stir in scallions, avocado, and tomatoes; season with salt and pepper. Set bean mixture aside.
2. In a large bowl, toss lettuce and chips together. Divide evenly among plates; top with bean mixture. Serve immediately, topped with additional salsa, if desired.

Nutritional Information

4 Servings, 643 Calories, 11g Fat, 109g Carbohydrates, 31g Protein, 50mg Sodium, 8g Sugar, 27g Fiber